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H.D. and the Years of World War I

NORMAN KELVIN

WHY INCLUDE H.D. AMONG WOMEN POETS OF 1890-1918? HER LIFE AND career largely belong to much later years. The answer is that in those later years, she continuously circled back to the period of the First World War,¹ or more precisely the years 1912-1918, the period in which she first made her reputation as a poet. There is also a curious sense in which these years become, retrospectively, the conclusion to an imaginatively lived life as a Victorian, specifically as a Pre-Raphaelite. When young, several modernist poets were enthusiastic about the Pre-Raphaelites but rejected them on finding their own voices—W. B. Yeats and Ezra Pound are notable examples. H.D. reversed the process. Embracing the Pre-Raphaelites in her adolescence, when she was introduced to them by Ezra Pound, she never overtly broke her attachment to them.² It does disappear from view for a while but returns stronger than ever in her sixties, that is, in the late 1940s. In these years, too, she notes that friends of the World War I period had been acquainted with the Pre-Raphaelites and that their lives and works were constantly discussed. Most extraordinary of all is H.D.'s lifelong enthusiasm for William Morris.³ Among poems read to her by the youthful Ezra Pound, Morris' gave her special pleasure. But that was only the beginning. A pattern of recurring references to Morris culminated in her writing "White Rose and the Red," a novel (completed in 1948 but still unpublished)⁴ in which Morris is, arguably, the male protagonist. He is the protector of a reinvented Elizabeth Siddal who is, in numerous ways, H.D. herself.

At the heart of all this is her method of imagining. Starting perhaps in 1934, after her analysis by Freud, the process of circling back to the World War I years begins in earnest, and it proceeds through a dynamic of continuous free association of past and recent persons and events and through her use of images and characters that embody these associations. Her writing—poetry and fiction—resists the linear chronology of her life. A case in point is the novel we know as *Bid Me to Live: A Madrigal*. In her analysis by Freud, during two brief periods in 1933 and 1934, they focussed on her childhood and adolescence and gave less time to the all-important

World War I period.⁵ *Bid Me to Live* invites us to recognize that the novel is meant to be a psychoanalytic reliving of the World War I years. It is that, in a sense, though it is of course not a personal “history” but a novel with a very special orientation, with emphases that go counter to later references in her work to those years, and with the vivid power present in much of her work: the power to make both the absent and the unseen dramatically present and palpable.

Most important of all is that her method, circling back and freely associating along the way, made her life-work a palimpsest⁶ whose uttermost layer are the years of the First World War. A necessary focus, her writing during the period gives her a presence among the poets of 1895-1918 that is reinforced rather than superseded by her subsequent career. No matter, by the way, that this is the time in which H.D. achieved fame as the foremost Imagist and that she later spoke of wanting to escape the confines of Imagist doctrine. The themes implicit in her poems of these years, and at times the technique employed in them, are the point of continuous return.

Sea Garden, published in 1916, and poems written between 1913 and 1917 and later collected as *The God* are essential parts of this *ur* matter and will be my focus. Because of space constraints I should qualify that. A few only will get my attention. But the imagery I think especially important is present in many poems in both collections.

Once again I cite what others have noticed: the persistent flower imagery in *Sea Garden* (as well as in her later work) along with the many references to water, wind, islands. But less attention has been paid to her rock imagery.⁷ I intend to make much of it. Rock imagery is not only as persistent throughout her career as is that of flowers, sea, islands, and wind, but juxtaposed with flower imagery it presents the greatest challenge of all to H.D.’s endless need to confront opposites with each other and to explore the many possible ways of relating them—from deconstructing their apparent differences to transferring the defining characteristics of one form to the other without erasing the outline of either. And it is overcoming or mastering this apparently extreme polarity that enables her most forcefully, I believe, to represent the contradictions and conflicts at the heart of her life and work. By the end of the Imagist period, that is, by 1918, she had fully articulated these contradictions and conflicts: female and male, victim and priestess, Helen and Greek god or goddess (often unspecified), mother and father, sister and brother, and in this pre-Bryher period, Frances Greg and—against her—Ezra Pound, Richard Aldington, and D. H. Lawrence, the composite male lover. But inscribing binary opposites also sets in motion the struggles to overcome the divide that marks nearly all that follows.

H.D.'s flowers and rocks are not symbols abstracted from particulars. In true Imagist fashion, her flower and rock imagery condenses and energizes the emotive and intellectual struggle in her life and in her practice as a poet. And they persist in her later work. They are present, finally, in the pre-Raphaelite novel that follows all but one of her major works devoted to Greek themes. They are present, that is to say, in that 1948 layer to the palimpsest that undercuts the base period and leads forward, rather than backward, to the early years.

"The Shrine, (she watches over the sea)," the third poem in *Sea Garden*, celebrates rock imagery in a way that already suggests an absent contrasting presence:

Are your rocks shelter for ships—
have you sent galleys from your beach,
are you graded—a safe crescent—
where the tide lifts them back to port—
are you full and sweet,
tempting the quiet
to depart in their trading ships?

Nay, you are great, fierce, evil—
you are the land-blight—
you have tempted men
but they perished on your cliffs.⁸

It is a female goddess who is apostrophized, probably Artemis,⁹ and the very first line raises the possibility of transferring characteristics. That the goddess has her shrine built on a rocky shore of what looks like a haven for men but is not, associates rocks with a femininity that is more than that of a fin-de-siècle femme fatale—she is "great, fierce, evil"—words that connote a hidden strength and power. Her allure is the thinnest of "female" masks. Nevertheless, the question with which the poem begins implies that she, represented by rocks and danger, might be capable of sheltering men. That such a thought is even conceivable adds to the hard, sharp, dangerous attributes of rocks a feminized ability to encircle soothingly. And despite the explicit rejection in the second stanza of the idea that such softness is possible, the poem veers on its intellectual journey to just such a conclusion, albeit in a complex, ambivalent manner. The final two stanzas read:

But hail—
as the tide slackens,
as the wind beats out,
we hail this shore—
we sing to you,
spirit between the headlands
and the further rocks.

Though oak-beams split,
though boats and sea-men flounder,
and the strait grind sand with sand
and cut boulders to sand and drift—

your eyes have pardoned our faults,
your hands have touched us—
you have leaned forward a little
and the waves can never thrust us back
from the splendour of your ragged coast. (CP, pp. 9-10)

Though still stern and powerful, the goddess has a touch—as well as eyes—that can pardon, and the waves—a treacherous but fluid force—cannot prevent the supplicant-sailors from reaching “the splendour of [her] ragged coast,” so that “ragged,” the condition created by rocks, finally is associated with safe haven, the haven provided by this particular goddess but surely also by extension feminine power seen as great and fierce. The strong woman, too, is shelter for the male voyager, not a danger, not the *femme fatale*—that is, not an incarnation of evil. Rocks, because they are strong, can play the role conventionally assigned to femininity regarded as soft and domestic.

“Garden,” so often anthologized as an illustration of Imagism, is a direct and explicit juxtaposition of flowers and rocks, a transfer of the attributes of one to the other. Part I (initially published as a poem in its entirety) reads:

You are clear
O rose, cut in rock,
hard as the descent of hail.

I could scrape the colour
from the petals
like spilt dye from a rock.

If I could break you
I could break a tree.
If I could stir
I could break a tree—
I could break you. (CP, pp. 24-25)

Here the transfer of characteristics takes place within the flower as an autonomous figure, as was the rock an autonomous figure in “The Shrine,” where ideas possibly associated with flowers went unvisualized. There is some ambivalence as to whether the rose has grown up in a crevice of a rock, thus establishing the rock and flower as separate entities, or whether the rose perceived by the speaking voice as “cut in rock” is so described

because its form is so precise that it suggests the attributes of a rock. Whichever it is, the speaking voice asserts the rock-like strength of the flower, reminiscent, for the moment, of the rocks representing the power of the goddess in "The Shrine." The coloring of the petals—which adds to the beauty conventionally associated with the rose as soft, and by extension feminine—is superficial, like the thin mask of allure of the goddess of the shrine.

Perhaps even more interesting is the potential contest of strength and will that the speaker of the poem brings to seeing the beauty of the rose. She has endowed the rose with a physical strength usually associated with maleness. But the contest cannot occur because of the enigmatic words "If I could stir." She can visually strip the rose of its superficial femininity—its color "like spilt dye [on] a rock," but she cannot fulfill her desire to pit her physical strength against the imagined physical strength of the rose. Somehow, the rose—this conventional symbol of the feminine—has paralyzed her will. Though it is gigantic power that would be needed—enough "to break a tree"—the "if" of "If I could stir" suggests that potentially she could have such strength. The poem is, finally, about two separate feminine entities, the rose and the speaker, that defy the idea of softness and yieldingness but that are, for reasons unclear, in a non-loving relationship. That all this depends on the Imagist spirit constructing the basic image—"You are clear / O rose, cut in rock, / hard as the descent of hail" demonstrates that H.D., in her Imagist beginning, used Imagist traits—directness of statement, concrete images, "crystalline" hardness to disclose, even as they are being realized, their opposites.¹⁰

Part II of the poem only indirectly relates to what interests me here. The opening line, "O wind, rend open the heat, cut apart the heat, rend it to tatters," endows both the wind and the heat with the attributes of solid matter—of a knife or knifelike instrument and a substance that can be cut or torn apart. It is another instance of H.D.'s method of transferring attributes from one entity to another, and though it does not explore the flower/rock binary opposition, neither does it undermine or contradict the impulse played out in Part I, and in other poems.

Two poems that extend the scope of the transference technique are "The Cliff Temple" and "Sea Gods." Both balance "The Shrine" in that they apply rock/flower imagery to male gods. But I shall focus on the second because it does so more explicitly and at greater length:

They say there is no hope—
sand—drift—rocks—rubble of the sea—
the broken hulk of a ship,
hung with shreds of rope,
pallid under the cracked pitch.

.....
 They say you are twisted by the sea,
 you are cut apart
 by wave-break upon wave-break,
 that you are misshapen by the sharp rocks,
 broken by the rasp and after-rasp.

II

But we bring violets,
 great masses—single, sweet,
 wood-violets, stream-violets,
 violets from a wet marsh.

Violets in clumps from hills,
 tufts with earth at the roots,
 violets tugged from rocks,
 blue violets, moss, cliff, river-violets.

.....
 We bring the hyacinth-violet,
 sweet, bare, chill to the touch—
 and violets whiter than the in-rush
 of your own white surf.

III

For you will come,
 you will yet haunt men in ships,
 you will trail across the fringe of strait
 and circle the jagged rocks.

You will trail across the rocks
 and wash them with your own salt,

.....
 For you will come,
 you will come,
 you will answer our taut hearts,
 you will break the lie of men's thoughts,
 and cherish and shelter us. (*CP*, pp. 29-31)

There is a dazzling array—a broad all-encompassing movement—of transference here. They say the sea gods cannot be conjured, that they—the gods themselves—are cut and twisted by the ragged rocks that shipwreck humans and thus are, like humans, weaker than the force represented by nature. But we humans, by heaping violets upon some implied shrine of the sea-gods, violets that run the gamut of color possibilities and are pulled from every conceivable natural setting, including rocks, have the power to confer upon the sea gods not only a new power—the power to nurture—to “cherish and shelter us,” but again in this image of a safe haven, to transform by overcoming, the encircling rocks; by “washing them with your salt”

you, the sea gods, submit the rocks to a kind of rebirth: one that makes benign and nurturing their threatening power. The very strength that cut and twisted so powerful a being as a god is now, by that god's response to the offering of violets, transformed—like the god himself—into an encircling shelter, into an embrasure of nurturing arms.

Through the power—the feminine power—inherent in the violets, the power of the rocks to destroy humans is first made submissive to the awakened and inspired will of the sea gods to assist humans; and then becomes the very instrument through which the gods shelter, protect, and nurture humans, that is, “cherish” humans.

The eponymous poem will have to suffice to illustrate the recurrence of the theme in *The God*, poems of 1913-17. The fourth stanza, Part I begins:

I . . . spoke this blasphemy
in my thoughts:
the earth is evil,
given over to evil,
we are lost. (CP, p. 45)

Part II continues:

And in a moment
you have altered this;

beneath my feet, the rocks
have no weight
against the rush of cyclamen,
fire-tipped, ivory-pointed,
white;

beneath my feet the flat rocks
have no strength
against the deep purple flower-embers
cyclamen, wine spilled. (CP, pp. 45-46)

In Parts III and IV, which conclude the poem, there is an ambivalent hint of contemplated suicide. It is used to pit, finally, human strength against that of flowers, so that the human is identified with the rocks that “have no weight,” and the god, all powerful, is, imagistically, one with the flowers.

In Part III, the speaker, who imagined herself powerful,

I thought the vine-leaves
would curl under,
leaf and leaf-point
at my touch,

the yellow and green grapes

would have dropped,
my very glance must shatter
the purple fruit (CP p. 46)

ambiguously concludes:

I had drawn away into the salt,
myself, a shell
emptied of life. (CP p. 46)

But the only power is that of the sea which, as noted, is thoroughly identified with flowers. Part IV reads:

I pluck the cyclamen,
red by wine-red,
and place the petals'
still ivory and bright fire
against my flesh;

now I am powerless
to draw back
for the sea is cyclamen-purple,
cyclamen-red, colour of the last grapes,
colour of the purple of the flowers,
cyclamen-coloured and dark. (CP, pp. 46-47)

Most striking of all is how quickly the rocks lose their weight, the mass that produces their strength, when pitted against "the rush of cyclamen." And how subtly the transference of the presumed strength of rocks to flowers contrasts with the transference of the softness and kindness of flowers to the rocks in "The Shrine" and "Sea Gods," in *Sea Garden*.

I have already said that H.D.'s 1933-34 psychoanalysis explored her childhood, adolescence, and a few subsequent years. But H.D. gave less attention to the World War I years (though there is discussion of Lawrence). By in part skipping over them to discuss experiences with Bryher that occurred later, she framed the period of interest to us between a pattern of childhood and adolescence, on the one hand, and a pattern of commitment to another woman, Bryher, that was to endure for the rest of her life. This had the further effect of making the period 1912-1918 an enclosure whose walls must fall if she was to go forward as a woman and artist.

If lack of time left the World War I years inadequately explored in her analysis, Freud himself functions in the same way that a landscape or biographical figure did in *Sea Garden* and *The Gods*. He not only "belongs" to the years preceding the World War I period but to those leading toward them, preparing the way for them, so that their absence makes them the ultimate focus of interest; but her interest in him as a subject for biogra-

phy—for *Tribute to Freud* is very much a biography of Freud, as Ernest Jones observed¹¹ —introduces him into the cast of characters—family members, early Pound, and Frances Gregg—who also lead us toward Imagism. Freud is, in the constructed chronology of her life, a pre- or proto-Imagist experience.

From that viewpoint, some remarkable lines that run backwards to the World War I period are to be seen in *Tribute*. When H.D. first enters Freud's consulting room, she looks with intense absorption at Freud's famous collection of figurines, Greek and Egyptian gods and goddesses. I do not wish to strain and stretch my thesis by calling these figurines (some marble, some terracotta) "rocks," but at least we can say they are of a hard substance; and what is noteworthy is that Freud, who has entered the room, tells H.D. that she is the first patient entering that room to look first at the figurines and then at him (*TF*, p. 98). Freud himself conveniently (for purposes of this article) establishes a binary division. At one extreme is Freud, a soft entity of flesh, clothes, posture, and facial expression, endowed by the perceiving imagination with a humane, humanistic interest in H.D., as well as with potential symbolic meaning. At the other are these carved or baked hard substances, endowed by the perceiving imagination with aesthetic qualities and with the authority of powerful symbols, explicit in their symbolic meaning (Isis, priestess, for example, whom, as a figurine, Freud displays, represents an entire side of H.D. the artist).

But Freud, within this binary opposition, becomes an active principle. When the analysis is far along, he wistfully, or complainingly, tells H.D. that in the transference process she has given him her mother's identity, not—as he makes plain he would have preferred—her father's. To simplify and give point to the narrative I have developed here, after recognizing the figurines in Freud's room as metaphors for the sometimes enigmatic gods and goddesses in her own World War I period poems, H.D. then, in this unstable picture, recognized the figure of the famous man who had the power to transform her. Over the next few months, she proceeded to transform Freud into a maternal, feminized nurturing being, one who, like the gods themselves paradoxically transformed by the rocks, "cherishes" her. In a play of imagination governed by indissolubly linked aesthetic and therapeutic impulses, she has actually "hardened" the soft-tissue, questioning, commenting Freud into a marble goddess, who, like the transformed rocks of "The God," embraces her as a mother would. Whatever it may be from a clinical viewpoint, this transference to Freud of the symbolic power and partial function of the figurines is an Imagist move, a creative gesture and accomplishment by the leading Imagist poet of the World War I period.

As for flowers, they become an extraordinarily complex component in H.D.'s relationship with Freud. For his seventy-seventh birthday, she

searches in vain throughout Vienna for gardenias, for which he has expressed enthusiasm, but at a later time, when she is back in London and asks a friend in Vienna to help, the friend writes that the florists say orchids are Freud's favorite flowers and that she has sent him orchids in H.D.'s name. Later, in 1938 in London, where Freud, a refugee from Nazified Austria, has now settled, she sends him gardenias, which by now have taken on a symbolic meaning. The note that accompanies the gardenias reads, "To greet the return of the gods" (TF, p. 11). This sending of flowers is tenuously connected, too, to what must be one of the more startling anecdotes about Freud, as well as, in its conclusion, moving evidence of how fine were H.D.'s own feelings and how graciously she is able to convey to the reader their depths. H.D. recounts that one day Freud did indeed startle her when she heard him "beating with his hand, his fist, on the head-piece" of the analytic couch, on which she lay, stretched out, and heard him say, "The trouble is—I am an old man—you *do not think it worth your while to love me*" (TF, pp. 15-16). Quite rightly H.D. wonders whether this is meant to be a therapeutic device or a personal cry, but with her splendid ability to leave unanswered questions that have no good answers, she says and does nothing. But later in *Tribute to Freud*, she recounts a day in 1934 when the yearning for *anschluss* was strong and the Nazi presence in Vienna was everywhere and ominous. There were swastikas chalked on the sidewalk that seemed to lead to Freud's door. H.D. went to Freud's house for her scheduled session and learned that none of his other patients had come out that day. Freud said, "But why did you come? No one else has come here today, no one. What is it like outside? Why did you come out?" H.D. writes: "Again, I was different. I had made a unique gesture, although actually I felt my coming was the merest courtesy; this was our usual time of meeting . . . our 'hour' together. I did not know what the Professor was thinking. He could not be thinking, 'I am an old man—you *do not think it worth your while to love me.*' Or if he remembered having said that, this surely was the answer to it" (TF, pp. 61-62).

Finally, the uses to which H.D. puts her "flower power" at one point, neatly and effectively invite this tying of H.D.'s 1933-34 analysis to the World War I period. In what must be the most extraordinary connecting of individuals in modernist literature, Freud, William Morris, Aldington, and D. H. Lawrence are for her a composite figure because all four were aware of flowers, loved them, knew their names, and cherished them.¹² As noted, Morris is both chronological forebear and latent presence in the World War I period. As noted, too, D. H. Lawrence is, personally and artistically, a central presence, perhaps the most important, in *Bid Me to Live: A Madrigal*.

The novel is one of the richest of H.D.'s several fictive and poetic

returns to the World War I period. Begun in 1939, it went through many drafts and was not in fact completed until 1948.¹³ But despite its having undergone multiple drafts, it is strung to the same degree of intensity as are the poems of 1912-1918. It is a vivid demonstration of H.D.'s radical revision of Wordsworth's assertion that poetry is "emotion recollected in tranquility." For H.D. all writing—including the poetic prose of her novels—is emotion recollected with increased intensity. This eliminates the time gap between the first event, often itself an act of writing, and the moment of recollection.

Bid Me to Live is structured around two of H.D.'s relationships of the period: that with her husband, Richard Aldington (Rafe Ashton in the novel); and with D. H. Lawrence (Rico Fredericks). All the other autobiographical "life stories" that belong to these years and might have been foregrounded are sharply subordinated or eliminated altogether. Most noticeably, the novel ends with H.D.'s final letter to D. H. Lawrence, and since the theme of the novel is H.D.'s quest for a self-definition as poet, what the structure says is that Lawrence was the most important person to her in the World War I years. That in her life Lawrence's last letter to her was written sometime after she had gone off to Cornwall with Cecil Gray, that Lawrence told her he hoped never to see her again, but that the novel ends by her reminding him that in a dream he had wept as she sang, tells us that closure of the novel does not end their relationship but leaves open the question of how Lawrence relates to her continued self-questioning. If we allow ourselves to think for a moment that *Bid Me to Live* was written for the Freudian purpose of getting the "meaning" of all the major events and relationships in her life during the 1912-1918 period, then what we discover, as H.D./Julia Ashton did, is that Lawrence/Rico was more important to her in her growth than either Pound or Aldington, and, in some way connecting with this, that Lawrence was the man she had come to love most deeply.

All this by way of seeing *Bid Me to Live* as a layer of the palimpsest that has the World War I period as its ground. And one of the many things it does in that respect is explore more deeply and in more detail than any other work the structuring power of the flower/rock dichotomy: the power of this Imagist theme to represent literally, symbolically, and with the intensity that for H.D. characterizes the use of memory in art, the multiple meanings contained in the ever-shifting relationship, in her writing, of flowers and rocks.

How various are the meanings expressed by her flower/rock combinations. This in itself means that the binary opposition is unstable, aiming always at the transference of characteristics from one to the other. Early on, during one of Aldington/Rafe's returns on leave from France, he learns

she has been sending her poems to Rico. What develops as Rafe questions Julia is a cerebral triangle, to which she gives meaning and closure by reading from a prose draft of what was to be a poem:

Here is no flower, however sweet the scent, how deep blood-red, how purple-blue the tint, can bring the life that thyme can, growing drift on drift by a rock, your rock is burnt-sun in that upper light, the grain glows and the inner heart of rock gives heat. Stay on the upper earth and drink wine from the golden leaf as from a cup.¹⁴

It is Eurydice, in H.D.'s reinvention,¹⁵ urging Orpheus not to try to rescue her from the underworld. But what she contrasts, in contrasting life and death, is warmth, heat, the actuality of a living love with their absence. The flowers of the underworld are inferior even to the mere thyme because the thyme is associated with the rock, with its capacity to store heat. The rock is not only the symbol of all that is most important—that is, sensory, sensual life—but even has its own visual beauty. And since it is associated with Orpheus, the rock is associated also with art: music as a gift of life.

But Orpheus is Rico /D. H. Lawrence, and finally what makes him the key figure in *Bid Me to Live* is his “man-woman” theory and Julia’s final rejection of it. In criticizing her Orpheus poem, he had said, “Stick to the woman-consciousness, it is the intuitive woman-mood that matters” (BML, p. 62). Julia rejects the theory outright—she is thinking of Rafe, of his saying he loves her but “desire[s] *l'autre*,” Bella Carter (Brigit Patmore) (BML, p. 56) and that she, Julia, understands: understands, that is, the “man-consciousness.” The glow of the sun-warmed rock is that consciousness, and the entire passage can be taken as a step along the way in Julia’s quest for an identity. And a moment earlier she had said: “This mood, this realm of consciousness was sexless, or all sex, it was child-consciousness, it was heaven. In heaven, there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage” (BML, p. 62).

In many passages that follow, Julia will return to this assertion, not so much developing as clarifying it. What she is getting at—and will arrive at—is an ambivalent concept of the artist, and it will never be clear whether the artist is androgynous or sexless, only that “artist” is a pure concept: that of an autonomous being, neither man nor woman.

It is a slippery world she envisions herself to be in. In this reliving of the World War I years, she has stopped where there was, biographically, no closure but a chapter ending. The birth of her child will occur in the spring of 1919 (she is already pregnant, and Cecil Gray is the father when the “history” concludes, though no mention of her pregnancy is made in her long letter to Rico which concludes the novel).

In H.D.'s actual life, the birth of her child, the end (forever) of her relationship with D. H. Lawrence, and the entrance of Bryher into her life

refuse final resolution of her emerging need to say I am an artist, not a woman or a man. She will always need love, and from now on there will be brief affairs with several men and women both, though Bryher will remain the central figure for her—indeed, her rock. But to speak of all this is to speak of what borders the war years. In those years themselves, her main trajectory, I would argue, was not from lesbian love (Frances Gregg) to heterosexual love (Richard Aldington and D. H. Lawrence) but from wounded wife, a victim who refuses to be a victim—to artist, which remains a complex goal for her, and one which was sought through poetic techniques which are readily and plausibly called Imagistic and are at the heart of these years for her.

The penultimate chapter of *Bid Me to Live*, which both recapitulates and concludes Julia's stay in Cornwall with Vane, and which sets the scene for her writing the long letter to Rico that ends the novel, is rich in the use of rock/flower images, and these in turn are made to bear a great span of meaning, from the pre-historical presence of Druids in Cornwall, that is to say, time, to the most intense, in-the-novelistic-present self-identification with the rock/flower multiple meanings since *Sea Garden* and *The God*.

Chapter IX begins:

The wind was cold. Salt tasted. She tasted salt. Her lungs drank in mist and salt-mist. Under her feet was a new fragrance. She stooped to short ragged new leaf. She pinched a ragged tansy-like small leaf. It grew close to the ground. She lifted it to her nostrils. New fragrance.

She walked along a path in a drawing-book. It was a symbolic drawing, over-emphasized. A large grey boulder was half-covered with ivy. . . . Stark grey stones stood up. There was an actual Druid circle on the hill, Frederick had written. . . . To her right . . . from the crest of the stony hill, lay the village where Rico and Elsa [Frieda Lawrence] had lived.

The whole place was out of the world, a country of rock and steep cliff and sea-gulls. She sat down on a flat rock and wondered if the asymmetrical set of stones, just as the hill dipped, was the Druid sun-circle Rico wrote of. She found she was still clutching the weed-like leaf. She thought, "It's like something in a kitchen garden." She tied it in her handkerchief. "I will send this to Rico and ask him what it is." (BML, pp. 143-144).

It is Rico's country she is experiencing, even as she lives with Vane. It is Rico—close reader and critic of her poetry, challenger of her own concept of herself as a woman, and, in this novel at least, the man she loves most—who both infuses her experience of stones, rocks, and flowers with a host of meanings temporal and spiritual but centered on love, and liberates her from the present, material world: from the world in which he has in London inscribed her. It would be too much to say that the chapter tells us Rico has finally enabled her to define herself as an artist, but the themes of stones, rocks, and flowers suggest that beauty endures, that the fragility of the flower's loveliness escapes tragedy because it is part, and only part, of a

landscape that both endures and suggests "another world," that is, a world in which fragility and transience are meaningless.

There are really three Julias in the novel taken as a whole that need to be brought into relationship with each other and have their contradictions resolved. There is Julia the woman as sexual being, in search of fulfillment; there is Julia the woman as victim, in search of escape from the pain Rafe has inflicted on her; and there is Julia the artist, which, in her search, she defines in defiance of Rico's ideas. Rico in London had insisted on the man/woman dichotomy governing art. In his critique of Julia's poem "Eurydice" he had told her to stick to the experience of Eurydice and not try to understand Orpheus. But in Cornwall, liberated by scenes such as the one described above, she insists that as an artist, which she now confidently believes she is, she is "man-woman/woman-man." As such, she has the strength of the rocks and stones, which in this case she associates with maleness, and the beauty and persistence—its own kind of enduringness—that she associates with the humble plant she has pulled from between the rocks. Absorbed into the artist as man-woman is woman as victim.

In Chapter IX, following or as part of the scene described above, Julia walks on, and comes to a wall: "In the wall was another unfamiliar leaf, like a seed-pod, growing under water. It stuck parasitic roots into the almost earthless cracks of the stones, a leaf of another age, growing under water" (BML, pp. 144-145). Stalks of these too she will send to Rico to name, and I cannot help but feel that the "parasitic" roots cause the woman as victim to suggest itself again. For H.D.'s women-as-victims are more complex than merely beings who have been hurt by men. In her own ambivalent response to the concept of victim, H.D. partially blames the victim for being dependent, as if to say, without independence the vulnerability to feelings of victimization are natural, not moral or socially constructed. H.D. is not yet through with the theme of woman as victim.

As if to gloss the symbolizing descriptive passages quoted above, the following paragraph follows soon after the plucking of the stalks of the plant growing in the wall. It also, perhaps even more importantly, reminds us that London was not just the place where Julia struggled to hold the love of Rafe and to maintain an identity as poet in the face of Rico's criticism, but was also where she experienced World War I:

She had walked out of a dream, the fog and fever, the constant threat from the air, the constant reminder of death and suffering (those soldiers in blue hospital uniforms) into reality. This was real. She sat down on a rock. She . . . laid the stalk with the bulbous underwater leaves beside the leaves of the curled parsley-like plant. . . . She was Medea of some blessed incarnation, a witch with power. A wise-woman. she was seer, see-er. She was at home in this land of subtle psychic reverberations, as she was at home in a book. (BML, p. 146)

That the two plucked plants are associated with her sense of power is clear. That her power is to do what an Imagist poet does, that is, to “see,” is my reading of what we are told next. And if “book” is too general to stand for poetry, it at least in H.D.’s use of the word means art. The world created by art is equivalent to the otherworldliness of the nature experience she is having in Cornwall. Both it might be said, have positive, beneficent meaning. In contrast, the meaning of war is suffering, death, and most important, meaninglessness.

The novel ends—part of Chapter X and all of Chapter XI—as a long letter to Rico, in which Julia rehearses their relationship and in which her saying and repeating “I will never see you again, Rico,” means a permanent break from his tyranny as definer of herself as female poet and from his tyranny as a male whom she thought was in love with her and whom she thought she loved. It is the very landscape of rocks and flowers which she associates with Rico that has set her free from him. In the course of her liberation, the rocks have been given the warmth of a nurturing figure; have been associated with the Druids, that is, history or pre-history as the history of spirit and magic; and flowers, growing—that is, persisting—against reason in earth-less crevices between the rocks, convey the strength within the seemingly fragile. The use of rocks and flowers in this way is a palimpsestic return to *Sea Garden* and *The God*. But what is added here is that much of the enterprise of finding multiple meanings in rocks and flowers and defiantly ascribing the presumed characteristics of one to the other, was carried out in the midst of a re-experiencing of World War I: carried out, that is, by turning them into a kind of shield of Achilles that both protects from war and actively opposes war, specifically, from Rafe’s war-induced or war-encouraged affair with Bella Carter, and from the air-raids, the wounded soldiers in hospital uniforms. But the War has played another role, touched on in the concluding letter to Rico and developed in detail earlier in the novel. It was because Vane, finding Julia after an air-raid that had left her shaken and weakened, comforted and amused her (he took her to supper and to a film filled with symbolic meaning for her) that she had agreed to go to Cornwall with him. In the real life of H.D. the War precipitating her, as it were, into the arms of Cecil Gray led to her pregnancy, desertion by Aldington, and near-death in child birth. *Bid Me to Live* excludes some of the events and stops short of others that constitute the extreme moment in H.D.’s life of H.D. as victim, and though she is indeed about to be rescued by Bryher—that is, beyond the boundary of *Bid Me to Live*—and about to begin the second phase of a successful career as artist, the victimization that is part sub-text to *Bid Me to Live*, part sequel, needed to be confronted through art once again.

Of the several works that could be read as a confrontation of the

theme, I have chosen her unpublished novel, "White Rose and the Red." It offers many meanings for what I have suggested in this essay. It is set in the 1850s, and the characters are the Pre-Raphaelites, most notably Elizabeth Siddal, D. G. Rossetti, William Morris, and Godfrey Lushington. But through the figures of Elizabeth Siddal, Rossetti, and William Morris, it reexamines the period 1912-1918,¹⁶ and simultaneously, *because* it is set in the 1850s and deals copiously with Morris' early writing, as well as that of Rossetti and Elizabeth Siddal, the novel is a virtual sub-layer to the palimpsest. A Pre-Raphaelite past leading toward, rather than back to, the years 1912-1918, is created and created late in H.D.'s career; for 1948 was the year the novel was finished. Even more literally, by 1948 H.D. had re-established a warm correspondence with Aldington,¹⁷ who had returned to his own early enthusiasm for Morris, and was, as their exchange of letters shows, a key source of information in H.D.'s writing the novel.¹⁸

It is a fascinating development because the return to Aldington is a return to their relationship as two artists, responsive to each other's work; it makes the issue of H.D.'s victimization as a woman by Aldington extraordinarily complex, a knot that resists unraveling. As for Morris, he is a major theme in their renewed correspondence. It is Aldington who tells her that the protagonist of Morris' late prose romance, *The Glittering Plain*, is Hallblithe (LY, p. 94), causing her great excitement. By this time, H.D.'s genius for multiple and extended associations had been taken in hand, as it were, by her deep absorption in spiritualism, and so it was certain that Aldington's news was Morris speaking to her, for independently and prior to getting this information she had named a character in her other unpublished novel of the period, "The Sword Went Out to Sea"¹⁹ (the title is based on a line in one of Morris' poems), "Hal Brith" and the names were for her close enough to strongly suggest mysterious forces at work. Caroline Zilboorg's comment on this is worth quoting at length:

Perhaps this is the most important statement Aldington makes in all his letters to her. . . . She felt the name 'Hallblithe' revealed the enduring intellectual, emotional, spiritual bond between them. Aldington's use of the word here short-circuited, as it were, all that had occurred between them since 1918, reinstating the period when they had worked together as artistic partners in the earliest days of their relationship. Throughout the rest of her life she would return to this moment as a turning point, a requickening of their relationship. . . . [S]he wrote to Norman Holmes Pearson on May 8, 1951: 'Richard, just like Richard, seemed to cancel out all psychic debts with his one word Hallblithe. How did that happen, and how did it become a double miracle, coming through Richard?' (LY, 96 n. 3)

As they continued to discuss her novel titled "The Sword Went Out to Sea," H.D. became hungrier for information about Morris' life, and urged Aldington to write a play about Morris and Rossetti (she obligingly sug-

gested that Laurence Olivier might be cast as Rossetti and Ralph Richardson as Morris) (LY, p. 103), intimating too that she might collaborate with Aldington in writing it. This project gradually became H.D.'s own. She subsequently "saw" it as a novel, and titled it "White Rose and the Red." On July 29, 1948, H.D. wrote Aldington: "I am deep in with Top [Morris] and Gabriel now—the first part of *White Rose and the Red* was given over to Liz [Elizabeth Siddal] and she was a bit sour puss now and again. . . . I am very happy with the book. I hope I do not finish it for some time, as I love it and live it so much" (LY, n. 126).

Indeed, she was living it. That part of the novel which is about the relationship of Elizabeth Siddal and Rossetti—all that can be called biography—is taken from Violet Hunt's *Wife of Rossetti*, published in 1932, which H.D. says she named.²⁰ But in "White Rose" Elizabeth Siddal is H.D.²¹ and Rossetti and Morris are composites of the men who were part of H.D.'s life in the period 1912-1918. That she was intent on making "White Rose" an underplane for that period is indicated too by her soliciting from Aldington all the information he can give her about the Crimean War and general unrest in the 1850s. She would dearly have loved to have the Crimean War play as strong a role in "White Rose" as World War I had played in her relationship with Aldington, Pound, and Lawrence but was constrained by historical fact to keep it almost peripheral.²² Of singular interest, given her self-identification with Elizabeth Siddal, is H.D.'s conception of her: "Elizabeth was, we know, poor, sickly, a milliner's assistant, living along Brixton way, I imagine, or that is the impression I get," she wrote to Aldington on September 3, 1947 (LY, p. 105). Later in the letter, "We know about Jane Morris [the Jane Morris-Rossetti affair]. But was there perhaps another woman, or more than one? I mean another woman that the 'older brother' (Gabriel) loved or possessed first. Do we know anything at all about W. M.[']s feeling for Elizabeth? . . . Was Gabriel a 'father substitute'? . . . W.M.[']s feeling about Gabriel seems to me to be contradictory and inconsistent. Elizabeth was older and as the then companion of Gabriel, would perhaps have had some strong and subtle influence on the younger W.M." (LY, p. 105). That H.D. was older than Aldington when they met and married is not to be ignored.

But once into the novel, H.D. takes over from Aldington, Violet Hunt, and J. W. Mackail's *Life of William Morris*, her main source, on Aldington's recommendation, of information about Morris' life and career. Her Morris becomes Pound, Lawrence, Freud, Aldington. He is played off against Rossetti as Pound and Aldington. And with no historical encouragement at all, H.D. makes the relationship between Morris and Elizabeth Siddal central, even more important with respect to her art than is her tie to Rossetti. It is Morris who sends her his work, including manuscripts, as Pound did

H.D., and it is with Morris that Liz discusses the story she is writing, the "Gold Cord." In some ways, her tale-in-progress becomes the hinge or the focus for all that is said about art and spiritualism throughout the novel, for it is Morris who instigates some of the connections and sees others. That H.D. had also unfinished business—her table-tapping and the figure of Lord Howell in "The Sword Went Out to Sea"²³—is apparent. She ingeniously transforms the seance group in *The Sword* into the Order of Sir Galahad, the short-lived undergraduate Malory-inspired circle of friends Morris impulsively named at one point. Round tables and séance tables are palimpsestically overlaid, and it is time to mention that H.D. obtained at the sale of Violet Hunt's estate a three-legged table that had been Morris' and that she used for her table-tapping séances.²⁴

There are many ways "White Rose and the Red" can be related to the period 1912-1918, the most obvious being H.D.'s own statement that it was so related, and her dependence on Aldington for historical and biographical information. However, H.D.'s Morris, a lithe figure who pads through the jungle softly like a young lion ("WRR," 3rd dr., p. 227)²⁵—that is, Pound, Lawrence, or Aldington—is also Freud, the figure of the 1930s who directs H.D. back to the period 1912-18. (It is also worth noticing that Freud becomes as well the bottommost layer in what in "White Rose and the Red" is not a return to the beginning: the spiritualism, which in its full flower belongs to the World War II period and after. Freudian psychology, with its explorative attitude toward dreams, became for H.D., in "White Rose," license to see dreams as continuous with mystic other-worldly experiences and connections revealed through spiritualist séances.

My own purposes are best served by seeing in the novel the extraordinary effort to which H.D. goes to disengage from their bases the attributes of polarized entities and then to mix and rearrange them in a complex yearning for unity between the alleged opposites. And by seeing, finally, that it is Morris who provides her with an image for this elusive unity.

The whole discourse concerning opposites is framed in the novel by the "white" and the "red" rose, and the self-conscious desire to unite them is alluded to by the fictive Morris quoting Richmond in *Richard III*, "We will unite the white rose and the red," ("WRR," 4th dr., p. 415), which of course H.D. takes as a metaphysical challenge not a political one—or at least not political in the sense that Richmond's literal reference to York and Lancaster is.

A great deal of the novel is devoted to the many associations Morris, in his interior monologues and reveries, makes with Elizabeth Siddal's name, that is, with the name "Liz." Through revelations in spiritualist sessions, the name *lis* (lily) occurs, and is in turn multiplied in meanings. For example, in Rossetti's painting *The Blessed Damozel*, for which H.D. made

Elizabeth the model, she holds in her hands, as she does in Rossetti's poem, three lilies.²⁶ But in Morris' tale "The Hollow Land"—a central connection between him and Elizabeth Siddal—he sends her the proofs before it is published in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* and she is much taken with it), the first-person narrator is Florian de Liliis, and a world of meaning is found in this heraldic family name. And remembering when he first "encountered" Liz, in a reverie on Blackfriars Bridge at night, in the snow, Morris thinks:

This white rose, stained red, was not like the others. Lis was a snow-flower. In memory he was again whirled with the stinging snow-dust round a corner into a little courtyard. . . . But the creature beside him was tangible, though a mist of fine drifting snow veiled her occasionally. She was a white rose certainly. But he had found her, before he walked across Blackfriars Bridge with her in the snow. She was Margaret, Walter's sister in the *Unknown Church*. And she was Margaret again, a cousin perhaps, the lover who had waited for him in *The Hollow Land*. ("WRR," 4th dr., p. 269).

I know of no etymological connection between "Margaret" and "lily," but then there is none between flowers and rocks, though if H.D. was thinking of the Latin origin of the name Margaret, something of interest emerges. The Latin word *margarita* means pearl, and perhaps equally with its whiteness, the hardness of the pearl should be of interest here.

H.D.'s Morris explains the interconnections to Liz when he is with her at Hampton Court, a favorite outing for the historical William Morris but not with the historical Elizabeth Siddal. William Morris says:

"I will ask you to think of me as happy with this lady I call Lis."

"Lis?" she questioned.

"It's from the story ['The Hollow Land'], I told you. I think that my rose was a lily. That is what I meant, her name, I mean, being Lis.

She did not know what had happened to her. She felt like a stone being dropped down a deep well. ("WRR," 3rd dr., p. 310.)

Why someone whose name, that of a flower in Morris' view, should feel like a stone when her elusive name seems also to be that of another woman, the one who is indeed her rival for Morris' love, is another of the small but arresting matters that suit my reading of H.D.'s work. But suffice it to note that once again H.D. has erased differences, equating the white rose and the lily because they are white.

As for the red rose, the associations with the flower, the color, and the name are again multiple. Most embracing of all, "Rossetti" means "rose." In many ways, the red rose is apparently dominant; it has lethal power, potentially, to stain the white rose red. Godfrey Lushington, a minor figure in the historical life of William Morris whom the novel converts into a major character, is a key to much of the spiritualism that is woven into this tale of the Pre-Raphaelites. A beloved sister, Vivien, has died, thrown from

her horse, and Godfrey's identification with her is so thorough that he not only feels guilt and loss; but in séances, as well as in visionary experiences, relives her life and suffers her death. Significantly, Vivien is also the "white rose," the dead sister of a friend, whom William Morris tells Lizzie he loves. The text reads: "Godfrey had found out that the white rose [in this case Vivien] was red. Was sacrifice always necessary? William Morris knew that it was. The white rose was stained with the blood of the heart" (WRR, 4th dr, p. 264). All this is enveloped in a faintly outlined larger tale. For Vivien had a lover, Carew, whom she was going to meet in the wood and who, subsequently, is killed in the Crimean War, which in the novel, as noted, works as best it can to return us (or move us forward) to World War I, and it is the blood of Carew's heart that also stains the white rose, Vivien.

And among the many other confrontations of red with white, Red Harald, in Morris' "The Hollow Land," the tale which is thoroughly explored in H.D.'s novel and which made a link between William Morris and Elizabeth Siddal, defeats in battle Florian de Liliis. But in the larger view, it is a dubious victory for Red Harald, for he sends Florian in death back to the Hollow Land, where he is reunited with his lover, Margaret, his original "white rose."

As for William Morris and Elizabeth Siddal, Rossetti, the embodiment of red, sets limits to their relationship. It is red, it seems to me, that dominates the scene of greatest intimacy between Morris and Elizabeth Siddal. They are, again, at Hampton Court, where, it should be noted, they arrange to meet frequently: "The air was fragrant with the un-trimmed climbing roses. [Morris] was seated on the window-ledge, his arms about her waist, his head bowed forward. He felt her heart under his burning forehead. It was the first time he had touched her" ("WRR," 3rd dr, p. 387). William Morris, who has said he is Florian de Liliis, has become suffused in red, given over to its power, in the scene that brings him and Lizzie Siddal closest.

This power of red, finally, has the characteristics of rocks, in relation to the easily stained and overcome embodiments of white. There are in fact passages that begin with roses and lilies and move by easy transition to rocks and flowers.

Florian de Liliis, remembering when he first enters the Hollow Land (he is first-person narrator of the tale), says: This "heaven . . . was no infinite vault [Lizzie had called the Hollow Land the inverted bowl of heaven]; . . . it was the bed of leaves . . . into which I let myself down carefully, by the jutting rocks and bushes and strange trailing flowers and there lay down and fell asleep" ("WRR," 4th dr, p. 269).²⁷ We are back to the sheltering harbor-rocks of the islands in "The Shrine" and "Sea Gods." Though the flowers provide the soft and inviting bed, the jutting rocks also

provide care: they are the sentinels. As barriers to whoever would be an easy traveler into the Hollow Land, they shelter Florian and his beloved Margaret. Significant of not, though there is reconciliation between Florian and Red Harald, the latter does not follow Florian in his final entry into the Hollow Land.

This is again the sharing of characteristics between rocks and flowers, and the movement to try to unite them as beneficial equals has begun. It is the final move in this novel, written in 1948, to find the unity that H.D. sought in 1912-1918 when she first disengaged the characteristics of rocks and flowers from their received images and attempted to achieve an unstable unity by conferring the attributes of each upon the other. It is Morris' medievalism, the Ruskinian root of his own Pre-Raphaelitism, that provides the concrete image for enduring, stable union, between the rock and the flower. It is relevant, too, that early in "White Rose and the Red," in an imagined conversation between D. G. Rossetti and John Ruskin (in history and in this novel Elizabeth Siddal's patron), Ruskin observes that women do not love line, with which, he, Ruskin, identifies through his own aesthetic. "They love colour"—a love that the text makes clear is Rossetti's concept of the basis of painting. But oddly at this early point, Rossetti answers, "What Liz wants—she as good as said so—is a rock" ("WRR," 4th dr. p. 170). Morris is the rock, and the exchange between Ruskin and Rossetti unknowingly establishes him as the answer to Lizzie's need, before he appears. But of course Morris is also—and equally—identified with flowers.

A significant narrative detail in "The Unknown Church," the second of the two early stories central to the relationship between William Morris and Elizabeth Siddal, is observed by her and moves us to the ultimate union: "It was Walter"—who Morris has told us is himself—who carved the marble "all about with many flowers and histories" ("WRR," 4th dr, pp. 222-233). And the text notes that before Morris as a boy went away to school, he had discovered Gerard's *Herbal*:

That was his first great moment. Every leaf, every hedge-rose, every bluebell stalk took form. A cluster of blossoms detached itself from the maze of the thorn and became stylized, a theme for decoration. There were stone flowers in some of their northern Cathedrals, not yet "discovered." . . . The stone flowered of itself, if you let it alone. ("WRR," 4th dr , pp. 226-227).

The symbolic meaning here is remarkably apposite to a reading of H.D.'s work. It is not just that art, through its own particular power, converts flowers into stones; it is that stones—symbolizing the enduring—are the material of art, but an art that is not realized until informed by the imagery of flowers, with all its symbolism.

Elsewhere, too, the independent force exerted by flower imagery tells us that this is an enduring union. H.D.'s text continues, faithfully echoing

the historical Morris (though later than the 1850s): "The living stone had gone from most of their Cathedrals, and what was left was being smothered, killed ("WRR," 3rd dr., p. 208). And Elizabeth Siddal rises, as it were, to the challenge set by the Morris who is her spiritual father, her mentor, her Freud, and the composite of her lovers of 1914-1918. In the story she is writing, the "Gold Cord," which is being accomplished through a process that is sometimes simply writing and other times use of scenes and details that emerge in her reveries, she envisions a castle: "The pillars had apparently been hewn out of the solid rock, or the rock had been cut away from them, for they were part of the floor. She could not judge the ceiling but they must be one with the rock-roof as well. . . . The doors . . . were rock doorways without doors" ("WRR," 3rd dr., p. 369). And in a discussion of her story with William Morris, he speaks first, saying "I am Florian in *The Hollow Land*." It is clear from what follows that her own vision, for her own story, is a response to "The Hollow Land": "It isn't hollow," she said, "that is, it is a mountain with the galleries cut out and those rough support-pillars. But perhaps it is hollow, but *in* the mountain. I called it the Holy Mountain" ("WRR," 3rd dr., p. 377). It was Elizabeth who had called William Morris's hollow land "an inverted bowl of heaven." Her own image here is richly suggestive. The mountain is "higher" than the hollow land. Does she aspire higher, toward a religious dimension not in "The Hollow Land"? But the mountain is hollow. Is this negative, suggesting a weakness, a "hollowness" of religious faith in her story? Or is the mountain a tall structure, surpassing all around it, waiting to be filled up, to become the dwelling place of lovers like Walter and Margaret, but a Walter and Margaret reinvented and reconceptualized by H.D.? Most interesting of all, Lizzie's castle recalls the cliff-shrine of "The Cliff Temple" in *Sea Garden*; it is again a joining of opposites, of Morris' medieval churches and castles with the shrines to Greek gods and goddesses. H.D.'s castle, here, resonates with her lifelong absorption in classical Greek culture, implicitly positing one more pair of opposites—classical temples and Gothic structures—in order to exchange their characteristics, a move, by the way, that would have set the historical Morris' teeth on edge.²⁸

But there is, in "White Rose and the Red," the inevitable shadow question in the quest for an answer to what is art: what is an artist? As an artist, Elizabeth Siddal can compete with Rossetti's "Hand and Soul," which she acknowledges as her first inspiration, as indeed does Morris in speaking of his stories. Elizabeth Siddal can erect a mountain that is art and will house lovers within it. But the perfect union remains an hypothesis. She is engaged to Rossetti. Morris, the rock she needs in order to emerge as herself, as the image with three lilies in her hand (who is also Morris' white rose), is beyond reach. For Elizabeth Siddal, still standing for the H.D. of

1912-1918, it is not that love for a man is impossible; it is that Aldington, Lawrence, Pound were in conflict with her as a woman, rather than figures who would enable her to fulfill herself. The idealized William Morris, a theme throughout her life, was the father-lover-brother who would have encouraged her to be an artist; who was approximated by Freud, but who, given Freud's age, his role of therapist, the brevity of the relationship, could, finally, only suggest—point in the direction in which she was traveling. The historical Elizabeth Siddal has to die, not a suicide here but a woman in search of a good night's sleep. *Bid Me to Live* stopped before the next phase in H.D.'s life began, before Bryher, thoroughly at first but ambivalently later, replaced all the men of the period 1912-1918. For different reasons H.D. had wanted to end before Elizabeth Siddal died but was persuaded by Norman Holmes Pearson to carry her to the end. H.D. wrote: "I had a vague feeling of un-ease and uncertainty about writing of the actual death of the wife of Rossetti. . . . I had so much identified myself with the story that I could not, for some strange reason, let her die."²⁹ I cannot, in the light of what we know, ignore the influence of Aldington on her original intention in shaping this novel.

Like Morris, Aldington is removed, beyond attainment by 1948, but he is also the Dante Gabriel Rossetti who was the chief cause of her suffering. It is H.D. as victim who finally dies. In this apparent contradiction, through the figure and life of Elizabeth Siddal she accomplished this. Morris, as an idea, as the final layer in the palimpsest, as well as the virtual, retrospectively constructed pre-1912-1918 plane, has shown the way to self-union in art, revealed the degree of self-realization and integration that is possible for the artist. But though Morris cannot, finally, erase the actual history of H.D., she could go on, now, and write *Helen in Egypt* (1961). But she could also fulfill her relationship with Aldington in the best way possible for her in these last years. Through Elizabeth Siddal, she converted the turmoil of 1912-1918 into peace, albeit the peace of death, though it is the death of H.D. as victim and sufferer at the hands of Aldington. Though "White Rose and the Red" does not initiate the return to an intimate relationship with Aldington, it cements the friendship that has emerged—his own new-found enthusiasm for Morris, and the help he gave H.D. in getting started on the novel, laid lines for what remained. With Aldington, in these late years, she finally establishes once and for all that she is artist/woman and keeps the woman/artist subdued but self-accepting. Through redefinition, she has made a successful return to the unsettled business of 1912-18. She will always be the artist first in her correspondence with Aldington. But she will also, and simultaneously, be the woman, her love converted into caring and intimate friendship. The actual Aldington, as the ultimate layer in the palimpsest that is Morris, recombines the scattered

parts of his Osiris-like career in her art, and becomes the intimate of her mind, and thus, in 1948, of her heart. I submit that it is this triumph and liberation that makes possible the fine conclusion of her career with *Helen in Egypt*. The life and meditation of the "real" Helen, as opposed to the phantom the Greeks and Trojans fought over, is her final major work, and one that does not return to 1912-18.

Notes

- 1 Albert Gelpi, for example, writes: "1919 marked a turning point in H.D.'s life. The previous years had been a period so filled with both achievement and anxiety, so critical and traumatic that she would spend the rest of her life mythologizing it: rehearsing it in verse, in prose, in direct autobiography and in historical and legendary personae, again and again seeking to unriddle her destiny as woman and poet" "Introduction," H.D., *Notes on Thought and Vision & The Wise Sappho* (San Francisco: City Light Books, 1982), p. 7. See also Susan Stanford Friedman, *Penelope's Web: Gender, Modernity, H.D.'s Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990).
- 2 Although her use of the material is different from mine, Cassandra Laity, in *H.D. and the Victorian Fin de Siècle: Gender, Modernism, Decadence* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), has provided us with the most thorough consideration to date of H.D.'s reading of the Pre-Raphaelites.
- 3 References to Morris and his importance to her are scattered throughout H.D.'s autobiographical writings. Norman Holmes Pearson sums them up: "H.D. as a girl sometimes thought of William Morris as her spiritual father. 'This is the god-father I never had. . . . I did not know much about him until I was . . . about sixteen. I was given a book of his to read, by Miss Pitcher, at Miss Gordon's school;—a little later, Ezra Pound read the poetry to me. The book Miss Pitcher gave me was on furniture, perhaps an odd introduction. But my father made a bench for my room, some book-cases downstairs, from William Morris designs. My father had been a carpenter's apprentice as a boy. This 'William Morris' father might have sent me to art school but the Professor of Astronomy and Mathematics insisted on my preparing for college. He wanted eventually (he even said so) to make a mathematician of me, a research worker or scientist like (he even said so) Madame Curie. He did make a research worker of me but in another dimension. It was a long time before I found William Morris and that was by accident, though we are told that 'nothing occurs accidentally.'" "Foreword," *Tribute to Freud* (New York: New Directions, 1974), p. x. Hereafter cited as TF. See also H.D.'s unpublished "Hirslanden Notebook" (p. 26), Beinecke Library, Yale University, from which Pearson quotes here.
- 4 The typescript is in the H.D. papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University; hereafter this document is cited as "WRR."
- 5 In *Tribute to Freud*, H.D. wrote that one purpose of her analysis was to prepare herself to help "war-shocked and war-shattered people. But my actual personal war-shock (1914-1919) did not have a chance. My sessions with the Professor were hardly under way before there were preliminary signs and symbols of the approaching ordeal" (pp. 93-94).
- 6 Again, "palimpsest" is a term regularly used by critics and scholars writing about H.D., as well as by H.D. herself in referring to her life and work. One novel, actually

- three stories thinly related, is titled *Palimpsest* (1926). For a particularly interesting use of the concept, see Erika Rohrbach, "H.D. and Sappho: A Precious Inch of Palimpsest," *Re-Reading Sappho: Reception and Transmission*, ed. Ellen Greene (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1997), pp. 184-198. For a reading of H.D.'s novel, see Deborah Kelly Kloepter, "Fishing the Murex Up: Sense and Resonance in H.D.'s *Palimpsest*," *ConL* 27, no. 4 (1986): 553-573; repr. in *Signets: Reading H.D.*, ed. Susan Stanford Friedman and Rachel Blau Duplessis (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1990), pp. 185-204.
- 7 Eileen Gregory calls attention to words in "The Wise Sappho" that, though my own interest here is not in H.D. and Sappho, have relevance to my theme. Sappho's fragments, H.D. writes, are not roses or orange blossoms even, "but reading deeper we are inclined to visualize these broken sentences and unfinished rhythms as rocks—perfect rock shelves and layers of rock between which flowers by some chance may grow but which endure when the staunch blossoms have perished." Sappho's fragments are "not roses but . . . a world of emotion, differing entirely from any present day imaginable world of emotion" (Gelpi, p. 58). See also Eileen Gregory, "Rose Cut in Rock: Sappho and H.D.'s *Sea Garden*," *ConL* 27, no. 4 (1986): 535; repr. in *Signets: Reading H.D.*, pp. 129-154. See also Burton Hatlen, "The Imagist Poetics of H.D.'s *Sea Garden*," *Ruideuma: A Journal Devoted to Ezra Pound Scholarship* 24 2.3 (1995): 119-120.
 - 8 *H.D.: Collected Poems, 1912-1944*, ed. Louis L. Martz (New York: New Directions, 1983), p. 7. Hereafter cited as CP.
 - 9 Thomas Burnett Swann makes the probable identification. See his *The Classical World of H.D.* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1962), p. 30.
 - 10 For a reading of "Garden" different from my own, see Gregory, pp. 544-545. See also Gary Burnett, "The Identity of 'H.': Imagism and H.D.'s *Sea Garden*," *Sagetrieb* 8, no. 3 (Winter 1989): 72-74.; and Hatlen, pp. 122-123.
 - 11 In his review, which appeared in *The International Journal for Psycho-Analysis* 1 XXVII (1957): 126, Jones wrote: "The book, with its appropriate title, is surely the most delightful and precious appreciation of Freud's personality that is ever likely to be written. Only a fine creative artist could have written it. It is like a lovely flower and the crude pen of a scientist hesitates to profane it by attempting to describe it. . . . It will live as the most enchanting ornament of all the Freudian biographical literature." Quoted also by Norman Holmes Pearson, "Foreword," *Tribute to Freud*, p. vi. For an engrossing exploration of H.D.'s psychoanalysis, and thus of her relationship with Freud, see Susan Stanford Friedman, *Psyche Reborn: The Emergence of H.D.* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1987), pp. 17-154.
 - 12 For a slightly different reading—Freud is included only indirectly—see Laity, p. 155.
 - 13 In "H.D. by Delia Alton" (*The Iowa Review* 16 [Fall 1986]: 174-221), H.D. wrote: "*Madrigal* this story of War I was roughed out, summer 1939, in Switzerland. I left the MS . . . with Bryer, when I returned to England, soon after the outbreak of War II. It was returned to me last winter [1948]. . . . I had been writing or trying to write this story, since 1921. I wrote in various styles, simply or elaborately, stream-of-consciousness or straight narrative. . . . But after I had corrected and typed out *Madrigal* last winter, I was able conscientiously to destroy the earlier versions. . . . On rereading the typed MS, I realized that at last, the War I story had 'written itself'" (p. 180).
 - 14 H.D., *Bid Me To Live (A Madrigal)* (New York: Grove Press, 1960), pp. 55-56. Hereafter cited as BML.

- 15 The finished poem is probably "Eurydice," in *The God* (CP, pp. 51-55).
- 16 H.D. said as much. In "Delia Alton," she wrote: "A labour of love (though hardly a labour) was the assembling of the story of Elizabeth Siddall, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and William Morris. I call this narrative *White Rose and the Red*, and it is an attempt to re-create the atmosphere of the London of the mid-years of the last century, and the group of writers and painters of which my own acquaintances and friends were, in a sense, the inheritors" (p. 193).
- 17 I for one am grateful to Caroline Zilboorg for selecting, arranging, and publishing the letters H.D. and Aldington exchanged, as well as providing through commentary and annotations a reading of the relationship between H.D. and Aldington in the post World War II years that makes clear as can be that H.D. without conflict had by then reconnected with Aldington as a friend who was more than a friend, as a fellow artist, as a source of information she needed for her writing, and, as she herself referred to him, as a "friendly critic" of her work. See Caroline Zilboorg, ed., *Richard Aldington & H.D.: The Later Years in Letters* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press., 1995); hereafter cited as *LY*.
- 18 See *LY*, pp. 94-110, 128 nn. 5 and 6, and 138.
- 19 The typescript is in the H.D. Papers in the Beinecke Library, Yale University.
- 20 See "Delia Alton," p. 191.
- 21 All women as protagonists in H.D.'s novels are H.D., but her comment in "Delia Alton" is specifically to the point here: "Something of my early search, my first expression or urge toward expression in art, finds a parallel in the life of Rossetti and Elizabeth Siddall. So, as a very subtle emotional exercise I go over and over the ground, find relationships or parallels between my own emotional starvation and hers, between the swift flowering soon to be cut down, in her case, by death, in mine, by a complete break after War I, with the group of artists described in *Madrigal*" (p. 194).
- 22 In her zeal, she conflated the Crimean War of 1853-56 with the Russo-Turkish War of 1876-78, asserting that Morris' anti-war poem, "Wake London Lads," concerned the first; whereas it was in fact written at the beginning of 1878 to oppose efforts by Disraeli and the Conservative government to lead England into the latter conflict on the side of the Ottoman Empire.
- 23 Lord Howell, of "The Sword Went Out to Sea," is Lord Hugh Caswell Tremenheere Dowding, Air Chief Marshall in command of the RAF forces that won the Battle of Britain, and thus a person whose efforts were a fulcrum on which human history turned. During the War, Lord Dowding began to conduct and attend séances, to get in touch with RAF pilots who had been downed. H.D. was also receiving messages from RAF pilots (see n. 24) but when she tried to share her information with Lord Dowding, he rejected her, asserting his messages were from higher spiritual sources than hers.
- 24 After noting that the table was so used, H.D. says that the messages she received from its tapping leg were from air-men who had been lost in the Battle of Britain. See "Delia Alton," p. 187.
- 25 Citations will be to both the third and fourth drafts (the two final ones) of "White Rose and the Red." Since the novel was never published, it does not seem to me that one draft is more authoritative than the other.
- 26 Intentionally or not, H.D. seems to have conflated two of the historical Rossetti's paintings. Alexa Wilding sat for *The Blessed Damsel*, who indeed holds three lilies

in her hands. Among the paintings for which Elizabeth Siddal was the model, there is one, *Beata Beatrix*, that was begun early, put aside, and not finished until 1864, that is, until after her death. Rossetti's leaving unfinished this picture for which Elizabeth Siddal posed fits the description of the painting in "White Rose." But "Beata Beatrix" holds no lilies in her hand.

- 27 The words which H.D. underlined are quoted directly from "The Hollow Land." See Morris, *The Hollow Land and Other Contributions to the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1996), p. 206.
- 28 Morris, like Ruskin, regarded Greek and Roman architecture as drastically inferior to Gothic. Ruskin's "The Nature of Gothic," setting out reasons for the contrast and preference, was a bible for Morris.
- 29 See "Delia Alton," p. 200.